

JBMS NEWSLETTER

Winter 2025

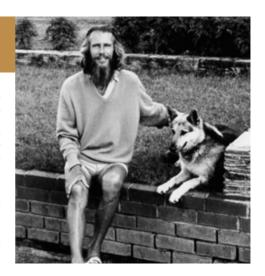
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WELCOME

Welcome to the Winter JBMS newsletter, where you will read all about our latest updates on what has been happening this year. We would like to thank you all for continuing to support us, especially at a time when money is tight for everyone, Thank you for your continued thoughts and prayers for the people of the Mutemwa Leprosy Care Centre and to us all at JBMS.

As we enter this season of Advent, we pray for a time of renewed hope, hope in progressing John Bradburne's cause, hope for all who live at Mutemwa, and hope that Christ's light continues to guide us.

May this season bring our JBMS family the blessings of Christmas and a peaceful, joy filled New Year ahead.



MUTEMWA LEPROSY CARE CENTRE



All residents living at Mutemwa continue to receive personalised care according to their individual care plans. Those on treatments including wound care and mental health support are stable and progressing well.

The current ongoing projects continue to do well and provide a source of income and produce for the Mutemwa community.

Garden: Onions, tomatoes, and leafy vegetables continue to supply their nutritional needs.

Drip Irrigation: Currently producing green mealies, tomatoes, and cabbages.

Field Crops: Harvested $2\frac{1}{2}$ tonnes maize, 3 tonnes groundnuts, and 1 tonne sunflower.

Poultry: 400 birds producing an average of 11.25 crates of eggs per day. Used mainly for nutrition and canteen meals

Granary: Maize and groundnuts safely stored.





The residents of Mutemwa extend their heartfelt thanks to JBMS and its donors for their continued support.

THE JOHN BRADBURNE MEMORIAL SOCIETY

The John Bradburne Memorial Society was founded in 1995 by John Reid and Celia Brigstocke, John's niece. The charity was set up in order to help support the Mutemwa Leprosy Care Centre in Zimbabwe. It was formed in honour of its late warden, John Bradburne who spent the last 10 years of his life caring for the leprosy patients of Mutemwa

The society continues to support the Mutemwa Care Centre, whilst also spreading information about Bradburne's saintly life and prolific writings.



(Pictured here is founder, John Reid)

Charity Objectives:

The objects of charity are to relieve people in the area of Mutemwa, Zimbabwe who are suffering sickness, hardship and distress from leprosy or other causes through the provision of supplementary food, medicines, medical care, clothing and shelter with the object of improving their conditions of life.

The John Bradburne Memorial Society initiated the process for John Bradburne's canonisation in 2019 with the support of Archbishop Robert Ndlovu of Harare. Dr Enrico Solinas heads the Cause as Postulator based in Perugia, Italy along with Fr Mgcini Moyo as Vice Postulator in Zimbabwe. Currently, John holds the title Servant of God. Testimonies have been collected in Zimbabwe and are being compiled into a document to submit to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in the Vatican. Meanwhile, additional testimonies are being gathered in the UK and other parts of the world. Alongside this effort, significant work is being carried out by the Historical and Theological Commission, with contributions from Didier Rance and David Crystal. We earnestly hope and pray that John Bradburne will soon be declared Venerable. bringing us closer to the prospect of his becoming the first Saint of Zimbabwe.

The John Bradburne Memorial Society wishes to express its sincere gratitude to all supporters and members whose ongoing generosity has enabled us to continue our work for over 30 years. We have sent out over £700,000 to Mutemwa over those 30 years thanks to your support and this money has been able to improve the daily needs of the patients and for specific projects such as introducing pigs and poultry, water bore holes, solar panels and trying to make Mutemwa as self-sufficient as possible. We are deeply grateful for your commitment and support.



Pictured Celia Brigstocke, neice of John Bradburne

JOHN BRADBURNE'S CAUSE BY DR ENRICO SOLINAS, POSTULATOR

Dear Friends of John.

The fact that the Cause began in that beautiful country of Zimbabwe speaks to how God's grace transcends all borders. Holiness knows no nationality; it is a universal call for every person, everywhere. John's life is a living reminder that sanctity is not reserved for a few but is a call open to all

I often think of John's own humble words, that if the Church were ever to canonise a man like him, one who saw himself, as Saint Paul once did, as "the rubbish of the world," then holiness would truly be within everyone's reach.

The Cause of Canonisation is progressing well. I want to express my deep gratitude to Monsignor Mgcini Moyo for his tireless work as Vice Postulator, and to His Grace Archbishop Robert Ndlovu of Harare, who, together with the Bishops and Archbishops of Zimbabwe, desire deeply for the diocesan process to conclude soon so we may advance to the next stage before the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome.

Next year will be an important milestone. We pray that, with God's help, this first phase in Harare will reach its completion. I ask all of you to join in prayer for this intention, for the Vice Postulator and myself, and for the Church in Zimbabwe.

A special word of thanks goes to our dear friend Didier Rance, for his dedication to spreading John's story and example of holiness throughout the world, and to Professor David Crystal for his remarkable work on John's writings, so deeply rooted in the heart and Christian spirit of the Servant of God.

May God bless and guide us all through the intercession of our beloved John, who, as we can see, continues to live on within each of us.

With a warm embrace to all.

Let us remain united in Christ.



Enrico and his son, Stephano at Westminster Hall



OUR VISIT TO MUTEMWA

BY REV BEN BRADSHAW SSC

On Monday 25th August, myself and our young family (Jorja aged 14 and Bethany aged 7), accompanied by our Harare based friends- Rob and Glynis Kelly, made a visit to Mutemwa Leprosy Care Centre.

It was wonderful to be back at Mutemwa. I first visited in 2010 when I also got the wonderful opportunity to meet Fr John Dove before his departure to God's heavenly Kingdom.

My wife, Danni, who is a qualified optometrist, spent the majority of the day conducting eye tests for the residents, many of them had never even had an eye test previously! The need was immense and evidently, we will have to plan a future trip and allocate probably two whole days to the residents. Danni identified a few eye issues which have now been reported to JBMS; they may ultimately need some fundraising to cover treatment costs.

As well as the eye tests we also climbed Mount Chigona and spent time talking to staff and residents. I quickly appreciated that I really do need to improve my Shona!

We said Evening Prayer in John's hut and very much embraced the settlement.

Mutemwa is a special place. Locations that have been inhabited by (soon to be) saints are saturated in prayer. John's presence is still very much felt at Mutemwa. You can feel him everywhere!

If you ever get the opportunity to visit, please go. The staff and residents would love to see you.

May John Bradburne and all the saints pray for us.









THE PROPHETIC ARC OF JOHN BRADBURNE: FROM "I DO NOT FOLLOW" TO RADICAL DISCIPLESHIP BY BROTHER DAVID CUNNINGHAM

In the late 1940s, a young John Bradburne penned what would become one of his most beloved poems, 'The Sacred Heart of Jesus.' The opening line strikes readers with its startling honesty: 'I do not follow Thee, O Lord' Written when



Bradburne was still in his twenties, wrestling with faith and searching for his path, this confession would prove remarkably prophetic of the extraordinary spiritual journey that lay ahead.

The poem's opening subverts every expectation. A work titled 'The Sacred Heart of Jesus' should surely begin with devotion or praise, yet Bradburne opens instead with admission of spiritual failure. This brutal self-honesty became central to his spiritual approach throughout his life. The line captures someone acutely aware of the gap between their ideals and reality, recognising Christ's call but acknowledging their own inability or unwillingness to follow fully.

This vulnerability resonates so deeply with readers because it reflects a universal human experience. Most of us can identify with feeling spiritually inadequate, with recognising the path clearly but struggling with our own limitations. Perhaps this explains why Bradburne attracts those who have themselves experienced unconventional spiritual journeys, late vocations, delayed callings, or seasons of feeling like "nearly" people who never quite measured up in conventional terms. Bradburne's genius lies in transforming this common spiritual struggle into the very foundation of authentic discipleship.

The Wandering Years: 1947-1969

Here we encounter what might seem a contradiction to the poem's prophetic quality. If the poem anticipated Bradburne's later radical following of Christ, how do we account for the subsequent two decades of apparent wandering? These years were marked by failed attempts at conventional religious life, geographical restlessness, and what appeared to be false starts in his spiritual journey.

Yet this extended period of searching doesn't contradict the prophetic nature of his confession, it deepens it. That opening line, "I do not follow Thee, O Lord," wasn't capturing just a momentary spiritual state but the entire arc of preparation he would need for his eventual calling.

The Franciscan Formation

From a Franciscan perspective, these wandering years take on profound significance. Francis himself understood that radical Gospel living requires a particular kind of preparation, a stripping away of conventional expectations and comfortable certainties. Bradburne's years of restlessness become, in this light, an extended novitiate with Lady Poverty and uncertainty.

Each failed attempt at finding his place was actually forming him for a vocation that could never fit any conventional mold. You cannot simply leap from comfortable, conventional faith into sleeping rough with leprosy patients in the



Rhodesian bush. Such radical discipleship requires a specific kind of formation—one that involves learning to be comfortable with being uncomfortable, to find God in failure and displacement.

The Perfect Realisation

When Bradburne finally arrived at Mutemwa leprosarium around 1969, he embodied what can only be described as the perfect realisation of the Franciscan way. Consider Francis's radical embrace of Lady Poverty, his tender care for lepers, his mystical connection to creation, and his joyful surrender to God's will, Bradburne lived all of this with startling completeness.

His years at Mutemwa revealed the full flowering of what that early poem had anticipated. Sleeping under the stars, sharing life with the most abandoned, writing poetry by firelight, living with virtually nothing, this was Francis's vision lived out in twentieth-century Africa. The constant outpouring of verse during these years reflects that irrepressible Franciscan joy, an inability to stop praising even in the midst of apparent hardship.



The Prophetic Arc Completed

The arc from confession to martyrdom, for Bradburne died at Mutemwa in 1979 as what many consider a witness unto death—reveals the profound prophetic quality of his early poetry. That young man's honest admission of not following Christ became, through grace and radical surrender, an extraordinary flowering of Gospel discipleship.

But perhaps the most profound prophetic insight lies in understanding how the Spirit works. When Bradburne confessed "I do not follow thee" in the late 1940s, maybe the Spirit knew he needed twenty years of learning how *not* to follow in conventional ways before he could follow in the radical way that would become his ultimate witness.

Conclusion: The Wisdom of Wandering

This reading of Bradburne's life offers hope to anyone who has experienced extended periods of spiritual restlessness or apparent failure. His story suggests that what we perceive as wandering or delay may actually be essential preparation for a calling we cannot yet imagine.

The honesty of that early confession, the willingness to admit spiritual poverty, became the very doorway to authentic Gospel living. In recognising his inability to follow conventionally, Bradburne was being prepared for a following so radical it would inspire countless others and place him among the great witnesses of the twentieth century.

'I do not follow Thee, O Lord', written as confession, lived as prophecy, fulfilled as perfect love. In John Bradburne's extraordinary journey, we see how God can transform our very failures to follow into the most profound forms of discipleship.

JBMS PILGRIMAGE WALK ONTO MELMERBY FELL SATURDAY 6TH SEPTEMBER 2025 BY DR GAVIN YOUNG (JBMS TRUSTEE)



Ever since 2021 we had walked up onto Cross Fell which John Bradburne had himself climbed on many occasions and wrote about in several poems.

However, several loyal pilgrims had requested a change so this year we moved a few miles north along the Pennines and climbed Melmerby Fell.

The Anglican diocese of Carlisle had kindly given permission for us to celebrate mass in their church at Skirwith where John's father had been vicar soon after the first world war and where John was baptized. Fr Ajish Kumpukkal came up from Ambleside to say mass concelebrated with our local parish priest Fr John Winstanley. Fr Ajish then came on the walk.

As in 2023 we were joined by a big group of young pilgrims from YouCan (Young Catholic Adult Network). It was cheering to see many familiar faces some of whom have done every pilgrimage walk each year since 2021.

The only drawback for this year's walk was that we needed to leave cars at both ends of the walk-at Melmerby and Ousby but somehow this worked out and, despite narrow winding country roads, I think all cars and pilgrims returned unscathed.

Unlike previous years the weather was kind to us and we left the village of Melmerby in sunshine walking at first up a farm track through pine woods up onto the open fell. Some walk quicker than others and soon we were spread up the fellside but we all gathered together after 1800 feet of ascent for prayers on the top of Melmerby Fell . Several pilgrims were Zimbabwean and some of the prayers were said and sung in Shona.

We descended via an old Roman track- Maiden Way. The farmer at Fellside Farm in Ousby had kindly given permission for us to walk across the fields to the farm and had, even more kindly, removed the Limousin bull to a safe place. The walk down to Fellside was especially beautiful with good views across the Eden Valley to the Lakeland hills

We ended walking into Ousby village and awaited cars to carry us back to Melmerby . Both Ousby and Melmerby pubs gained some custom . Many of us then returned for tea and cake in Skirwith Village Hall. Many thanks to Skirwith villagers for their kindness.

Next Year's Pilgrimage will take place on 13 June 2026, so make a note in your diaries.





ICON OF JOHN BRADBURNE BY JIM BLACKSTONE, SAINT DUNSTAN ICONS

This icon depicts John Bradburne transfigured in the light of Christ.

He is clothed in the Franciscan habit in which he wished to be buried, and carries a scroll on which is written in gold, 'El' - as the name of God which John Bradburne so often used in his poetry - and the words 'praise the Three-in-One' as a sign of the way in which he had truly lived the Trinity. Around the cross are three lilies which were placed upon his coffin; and upon the cross are drops of blood, as were seen falling to the floor from his coffin when the lilies were placed upon it.

Behind him on the horizon at his right (our left) is an outline of Chigona Mountain where he prayed so much, at the foot of which - in Mutemwa - he served the leper community.

The title 'Servant of God' is the title given by the Holy See, and 'John of Mutemwa' references the place of his Christ-like ministry.

Above all, John of Mutemwa looks directly at us in Christ's humility and love, calling us into the life of the Trinity. In his own words:

"Be merrily aware that you alone

Bestride the heavens with The Triune 'El'

And pray withal that all like bliss may own."

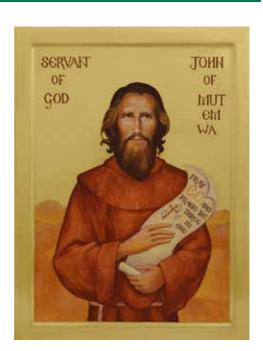


1. Making the panel from two planks of tulip wood









3. haping up the panel and trusses



4. Putting size, cloth and gesso on the panel



5. Double gilding the panel



6. Scraping back the gold to clear the painting area



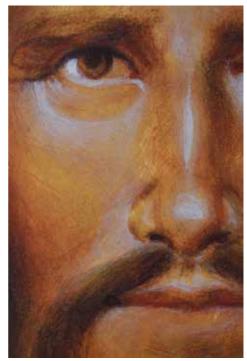
7. Transferring the drawing and starting to paint







The completed icon



JBMS WESTMINSTER CATHEDRAL EVENT, 13 SEPTEMBER 2025 BY FATHER DANIEL HUMPHREYS (JBMS TRUSTEE)



Central London is not an easy place to spend time in on Saturdays. It is crowded and the atmosphere could be well described as febrile. Despite this, a good number of members and supporters of JBMS. friends of John Bradburne, we might say, gathered in Westminster Cathedral on the afternoon of Saturday 13 September. What was the point of the afternoon? First and foremost, to celebrate the Mass and to do so in a spirit of thanksgiving for John's life and legacy. Westminster Cathedral, that beacon of prayer and oasis of calm in the hustle and bustle of London, proved once again to be an inspired and appropriate location. Added to this was its link with John, going back to his time spent there working as a sacristan for a year in 1957. John understood the cathedral rather well. as he remarked on it as a place of 'cranks and wise men, holy women and scrupulous crackpots, and publicans and sinners and saints.





The Mass was offered in thanksgiving, 'A Celebration of the Servant of God. John Bradburne'. and we were blessed with some typically spirited Zimbabwean singing and good, strong and wellknown hymns, well sung, and the music of Haydn with its clarity and tunefulness. We honoured John's Franciscan spirit by including two hymns linked to the great saint of Assisi - 'All creatures of our God and King' and 'Make me a channel of your peace.' We met, in fact, on the memorial (a confusing term meaning lesser feast or something akin to that) of St John Chrysostom, one of the Greek Doctors of the Church, who himself was much misunderstood and opposed in his life. Nevertheless, he remained faithful to his calling. This seemed rather appropriate, given what we know of our John Bradburne. Added to this, John Chrysostom was known for his brilliance with words, the 'Golden Mouthed' is the meaning of his name. We were reminded of the importance and beauty of words and of the other John's poetic skills.

Fr Philip Zimora spoke in the homily about the bearing of good fruit, referencing the Gospel Reading we had just heard (Luke 6:43-49). John Bradburne had borne good fruit, and that fruit had lasted, not least at Mutemwa, for which we prayed, but also in the Church generally and in the simple fact that we had gathered together in Westminster on this ordinary Saturday afternoon. John, his life and ongoing legacy, had brought us together. The work of JBMS is itself a fruit of

John's life and witness. We hoped and prayed this would eventually come to fruition with John being declared one of the holy ones of God.



The Mass was prayerful, and the prayers, led by Reverend Ben Bradshaw, reminded us that the example of John Bradburne urges us to pray for others and especially for the weak and the vulnerable. As Mass concluded we were encouraged to join friends, old and new, in the Cathedral Hall for a continuation of the celebration, with refreshments, and reflections on John's example and spirit. It was, all in all, a

good occasion, reminding us of the importance of being together and worshipping God, as John would wish. We continue to hope and pray that John's cause will proceed, and this event was a welcome opportunity to consider and discuss why we think it should do so. Thanks are due to the staff and volunteers at Westminster Cathedral for their warm welcome and for ensuring that all ran smoothly. We look forward to future events there.

A copy of Fr David Harold Barry's talk from Westminster Cathedral Hall is available on request from JBMS. Please contact: info@johnbradburne.com or call 07979 187498





A GUIDE TO BRADBURNIAN DISCERNMENT BY BR CASCARINO VALENTINE OFM

A lot of people wanting to join the Franciscan Order often ask me if we have a way of discernment as distinct as that of the Jesuits. My answer is always a resounding "yes" – and I often sustain this by pointing to the Servant of God John Bradburne (1921-1979). For him, one could know God's will through an aggregate of coincidences. This method may be dubbed coincidence-in-discernment. Bradburnian discernment doesn't simply deal with what one feels or thinks God may be saying, but rather how God is actively pointing out one's path through coincidences that one is fully aware of.

He began his vocation search in India during the Second World War as a soldier with the British later his biographer, sent him to the Franciscans in Dehra Dun where the army was stationed. This was in 1942, and this was Bradburne's first encounter with the Franciscans. Following demobilisation from the army, he returned to England, became a Catholic and tried unsuccessfully to become a Benedictine and later a Carthusian. When he left Charterhouse going to Jerusalem via Rome, the sub-prior Dom Andrew Grey, who had overseen his brief formation, gave him a letter to present to a Franciscan friend of his in Jerusalem. He arrived in Rome with a group of British pilgrims and coincidentally met this Jerusalem Franciscan whose name was Fr Carmel and who happened to be visiting Rome. Fr Carmel advised him to continue his pilgrim's journey to Jerusalem via Naples and not Brindisi as he had been contemplating. This

The ship from Naples left port on October 4 – the feast of Saint Francis. This was his third Franciscan connection. While on board, he ran into Fr Carmel once more and served his Mass. The Franciscan friar had boarded further south in Catania. This was his fourth Franciscan connection. On October 9 they reached Limassol and Fr Carmel took him to a friary. From there he was to procure a visa to the Holy Land at the Israeli consulate in Nicosia through the assistance of the Franciscans. The "wooden cargo ship" that took him to Haifa was called San Antonio. This was his fifth Franciscan connection

He arrived in Haifa and started off to Nazareth. There he went into a tiny café whose proprietor. Br Amelio. was an

Italian and a Third Order Franciscan. Br Amelio offered him the position of co-proprietor of the café, but he was intent on reaching Jerusalem. This was his sixth Franciscan connection. Through a few other coincidences involving the Franciscans in Jerusalem he would soon find himself in Louvain in Belgium as a postulant with the Congregation of Our Lady's Fathers of Sion – whom he encountered in Jerusalem.

His stay in Louvain came to an end after 18 months. His last attempt at religious life was again with the Benedictines at Prinknash Abbey which was short-lived. From then on, he lived as a Franciscan Tertiary. Research is ongoing to determine when he actually joined the Third Order of Saint Francis.

When he came to Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) he confided in Fr Desmond O'Malley OFM that he harboured three wishes: to serve lepers, to die a martyr and to be buried in a Franciscan habit. These three wishes were fulfilled - he had in fact received the Franciscan habit from Fr Sean Gildea OFM. When I recently visited his grave in Chishawasha cemetery, I noticed the following inscription: John Bradburne of Mutemwa, 3rd Order of St Francis, born 14 June 1921, died 5 Sept 1979". So, whenever you develop the idea that God is calling you to become a Franciscan remember to ask yourself this question: how often have I rubbed shoulders with the Franciscans? This is Bradburnian discernment.





Servant of God John Randal Bradburne Third Order of St Francis, Secular 1921-1979

God our Father, your servant John Randal Bradburne showed the power of Your love by his life and death.

May his love of Christ and of Mary His Mother, together with his selfless service to those considered least in the world, be a model for us to follow.

We therefore ask for a favour through his intercession, so that his generosity and holiness may be recognised by the whole Church.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

AMEN

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be.

If you have received thanks through John's intercessions please emailthe Postulator Enrico Solinas: enricosolinas@gmail.com

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With ecclesiastical approval from Most Rev Robert Ndlovu, Archbishop of Harare

VIRTUAL CHRISTMAS GIFTS:

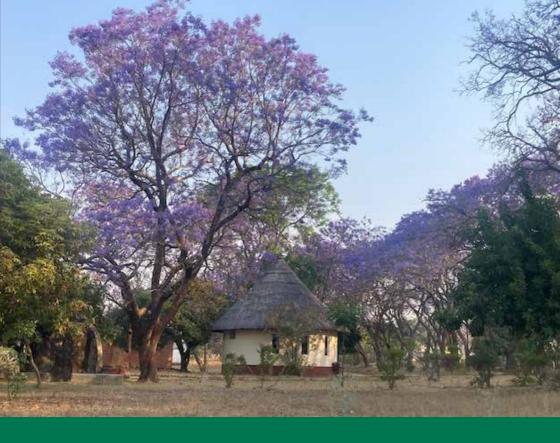
This Christmas share the true spirit of giving by choosing a Virtual Gift that transforms lives at the Mutemwa Leprosy Care Centre in Zimbabwe. Instead of giving a traditional present, you can make a difference to a patient at Mutemwa. Choose your gift

Choose your gift of love this Christmas:

- Gift a Chicken for a Year £25
 Provide fresh eggs and sustainable food for the residents throughout the year.
- Eye Treatment £30
 Restore sight and independence through vital eye care and treatment.
- Food Hamper for a Family £100
 Help a family at Mutemwa enjoy nourishing meals and essential groceries.
- Children's School Fees for the Year £120
 Support a child's education and open doors to a brighter future.
- Buy a bag of footballs £20
 Bring joy, play, and teamwork to the children at Mutemwa.
- Solar Panels for Residents' Houses £500
 Bring light and safety to homes with reliable
 solar power.

Every gift, no matter the size, makes a real difference. Buy Christmas Virtual Gift: www.johnbradburne.com





BUY A BRICK – HELP BUILD THE SEPULCHRE AND NEW CHAPEL AT MUTEMWA

Dear Friends and Supporters.

Each year, more and more pilgrims travel to Mutemwa drawn by the remarkable life, deep faith, and example of John Bradburne, Servant of God. His message of love, service, and devotion continues to touch hearts across the world.

As John's story grows in reach and the number of pilgrims increases, there is now a real need for a sacred space where all can gather in prayer and thanksgiving. The John Bradburne Memorial Society (JBMS) is therefore launching an appeal to build a new chapel and sepulchre at Mutemwa a lasting place of worship, reflection, and unity for all who come in faith.

We warmly invite you to 'Buy a Brick' and become

part of this beautiful project. Each brick will help build a home for prayer at the heart of Mutemwa, a testament to John's life and an enduring gift for future generations of pilgrims.

Your support will help turn this vision into a reality. Together, we can build a place of peace, hope, and holiness, a chapel that will stand as a symbol of love and faith for years to come.

Every brick tells a story. Let yours be part of John's.

To contribute, please visit: www.johnbradburne.com or contact JBMS at info@johnbradburne.com

With gratitude and blessings,

The John Bradburne Memorial Society



Support the John Bradburne Memorial Society (JBMS)

In carrying forward John Bradburne's legacy, JBMS remains deeply committed to supporting the residents of the Mutemwa Leprosy Care Centre, offering support to the community. Together, with your support, we are helping ensure that John's legacy of kindness and unwavering dedication lives on.

For more information about JBMS and how you can help, please visit www.johnbradburne.com.

To explore the rich collection of John Bradburne's poetry, visit www.johnbradburnepoems.com.

Thank you for being part of this journey

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